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Giving the Highest a Hearing

BY HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK

AFTER these many months of comparative seclusion and quiet you would hardly expect me on this first Sunday morning of our reunion* to speak about the affairs of the world with its social upheavals and clamorous problems—you have been living in that world yourselves. You might, however, expect me to speak about another realm where I perforce have been, where one must stop being active and become receptive, stop being strenuous and become quiet, stop talking and listen.

Centuries ago Elijah had that experience. In the midst of a strenuous life, in a turbulent time, an emergency befell which put a stop to his active social struggle and led him on a long journey to the wilderness of Sinai. There, as though to picture his own life to him, the noisiest things in creation passed before him—a strong wind, an earthquake, a raging fire, and God in none of them. Then in the narrative come the words which to succeeding centuries have rightly seemed among the most significant in the ancient literature of religion: "and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood."

So, long ago, a man came to the place where he gave the Highest a hearing.

Such is our predisposition that we naturally are tempted at first to estimate listening to a still, small voice as both more easy and less significant than dealing robustly and effectively with the world's hurly-burly. But even a moment's serious reflection indicates that giving the Highest a hearing is about as important an event as ever happens in human life.

The turning points in scientific progress have been

*This sermon was preached by Dr. Fosdick at Riverside church, upon his return to his pulpit last autumn after an illness of several months.

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associated with it. One man, compelled by the prevalence of a pestilence to suspend his teaching labors at the University of Cambridge, and forced, like Elijah, to take a vacation in the country, sat in his garden and, seeing an apple fall, listened to a still small voice about what it meant. To scientists, as to other people, this noisy world is a stimulating place in which to do things, but it is a poor place in which to hear things. When, therefore, we trace back momentous scientific achievements to their creative origins, we commonly come to secluded and listening minds like Copernicus, or Newton, or Darwin, each in his own realm giving an idea a hearing.

Even more obviously is this experience associated with the turning points of man's spiritual progress. A new idea succeeds at last in catching the inner ear of some attentive soul and, lo! an era begins. It may be a carpenter who listens until the very flowers on Galilean hillsides speak to him and he is captured and commanded by an inner voice so that he will die on Calvary rather than deny its imperious validity, and centuries afterwards men still know that if they would listen to what he heard they would find the things that belong unto their peace.

You see, this profound, interior experience of sensitive audition to the Highest is not easy, nor is it a mystic matter of moral import isolated from the world. It goes to the very quick of life. Indeed, see how inevitably it steps out into our private characters! Of every person in this audience it is true that sometime or other, in a way large or small, we have had a spiritual disaster; some moral failure, some moral tragedy has befallen us; and as we carry back our memory to the causative beginning of that lamentable time we know that it need never have happened if we had listened to an inner voice. To be sure, there were urgent voices persuading us to what we did but there was another kind of voice—our better selves, our finer moods, our common sense, our consciences—divine mentors that almost always speak with a still small voice. In this sense, the most deplorable tragedies that befall mankind come because we will not give the Highest a hearing. Even railroad crossings advertise the warning: "Stop, Look, Listen."

With this much preparation of our thought let us turn now to walk about our truth and see it, one aspect at a time.

I

In the first place, we must take it for granted that the appeal of the Highest will habitually come to us quietly, modestly, without obtrusiveness. We might have made this world other than it is, with the loveliest things shouting at the top of their voices and evil things shy and quiet but, as it is, the actual world behaves far otherwise.

When the New Testament wishes to present to us the method of the divine approach to life, it pictures God as saying: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." So the Divine is not obtrusive; he bursts into no man's life unbidden; he is reserved and almost shyly courteous. He knocks at the door to see if anyone, listening there, may care to welcome him.

How profoundly true to our experience this picture is becomes evident when we consider the divine voices in detail. Beauty does not shout at us. The fairest things we know, the loveliness of flowers or of woods at sunset time or of poems or of moving symphonies or of a mountain stream

> In the leafy month of June,
> That to the sleeping woods all night
> Singeth a quiet tune—

such things are not clamorous. Consider, rather, how beauty stands upon our doorsills and knocks to see if within someone may be interested.

So, too, our finest moods are not clamorous. Our worst moods are. Our tempers, our passions, our despairs, can blow like howling hurricanes and thunder like Jove, but when the hour of visitation from on High arrives and a nobler mood is ours, it almost always speaks with a still small voice.

So, too, our consciences commonly are a little difficult to hear. Especially out there in the world with its continuous din and its furious explosions, a man must take heed if he is to be sure of hearing his conscience speak. The young son of a friend of mine said once to his father, "Dad, what is conscience?" to which my friend answered: "I am not quite sure what conscience is, but, son, whenever that telephone bell rings even a little, you take down the receiver and listen."

All of the familiar appeals of the Highest speak in calm tones. The admonitions of experience, the reasonableness of common sense, the appeal of a new idea slipping silently into the mind, the call of social need described by Wordsworth as "the still, sad music of humanity," and even those more tremendous advents of God into select souls, to their own transformation and the shaking of the world—seldom are such approaches of the Highest noisy.

When, then, in such a boisterous world as this a man tries to keep his soul alive, he finds that one of the central problems is that of maintaining a sensitive ear for the quiet voices. If to any here this fact seems a sweet and gentle thing to say, it shows how little they understand its tremendous import. The great characters of history that must have stood like towers of brass against the tumult of the world have so been built. Look at any one of them. He had an inner voice so imperiously clear that when the pinch came and the cries of the crowd were against him, that voice was more commanding to him than all else. So in times like these, when strident voices make hubbub of the days, and the ugliest things are often the loudest, and what men would have us think and do is dinned into our ears with noisy propaganda, there is desperate need of men and women who have learned this deep, essential art of the spiritual life, giving the Highest a hearing. Only so come free souls, free in the only way souls ever can be free, whose dominant control is not clamor without but a still small voice within.

So Elijah, of the still small voice, was the most titanic moral figure in Israel's history for four centuries.

II

In the second place, note that however practical we try to make this truth and however far from creed and church we carry its illustration, we are dealing here with the essence of religion. If I did nothing else this morning I should be glad for the benefit of some to translate the meaning of prayer into the terms of this truth. Few things make more evident our American obsession with strenuousness, activity, aggressiveness, than our habitual treatment of praying as though it meant mainly or merely our talking to God. Even when we pray, many of us will not drop our aggressive self-assertiveness. But look at that Hebrew prophet: "After the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah

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heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood." There was momentous prayer, with momentous social consequences. But Elijah was not talking; he was listening.

You will understand, then, that our appeal in this matter is no mere modernist endeavor to escape the intellectual difficulties involved in self-assertive praying. Rather, this is part of the great tradition. As the ancient psalmist said, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak."

To be sure, this is not the only kind of prayer. Communion with God is a great sea that fits every bend in the shore of human need. But he who never listens when he prays, never prays. Here is a meaning of prayer which makes it an indispensable attitude of the soul. In a very noisy world prayer is giving the Highest a hearing.

Indeed, here is a function of the church which, if we could recover and exalt it, would enable us to meet one of the deep needs of human life. For men and women desperately need help in giving the Highest a hearing.

The other evening I had finished my serious reading and was casually looking over the advertisements in a popular magazine when to my surprise my eye fell on this statement about an insurance company: "We are an old, conservative company, operating on old-fashioned principles." "Why!" said I, "here is a strange thing; almost everything advertised today is praised because it is new. Buy this article, the advertisers say; it is the latest thing in the most modern mode. But here is another note—'We are an old, conservative company, operating on old-fashioned principles.'" There may be things then which we profoundly need that are not merely modern. In automobiles we would wish the latest smartness but not necessarily in insurance companies, on which security depends. So, while I am a modernist in religion to my finger tips, if it be old-fashioned to conceive the central function of the church as helping men and women in a turbulent time to hear their divine voices within, whose quiet persuasion makes the best personal character and social progress that we know but whose appeal so easily can be drowned out by the world's uproar, then so be it! For this church, in trying to meet that deep, eternal need of man, might well be proud to be run on old-fashioned principles.

No man or woman of us easily can learn this high art of listening to the Highest. It takes technique; it requires practice; it calls for a fellowship of friends in kindred endeavor trying to make divine voices imperiously clear. Even listening to music is an art. But to listen to an inner voice that talks of high motives in a world ridden by low motives, of cleanness in an age blatant with uncleanness, of Christ in a social order that still crucifies him—friends, in such a world, where the lowest so commonly is the loudest, we do need a fellowship to help us give the Highest a hearing.

III

In the third place, not only personal religion but to a degree that at first one might hardly guess, personal character is involved in our truth. If someone has been saying that it is possible to overemphasize giving the Highest a hearing, that on that point the New Testament itself issues a warning which the preacher had better heed: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves," I say: To be sure. Hearing any truth without doing anything about it is a peril to character. But after all, in America lack of aggressiveness is not our prevalent disease; activism is our chronic state of mind; whatever else we are, in church or out of it, we are doers. Without much fear of betraying this audience into lack of balance, therefore, I plead that while of course it is a danger to be a hearer and not a doer, for many of us it is even a greater peril to try to be doers—restless, impatient, aggressive doers—when all the time the interior voices of divine guidance have been drowned out in the world's uproar, so that like a ship with its compass out of order we go plunging strenuously on—off our course.

At any rate, it is indubitable that when we trace back great character to its genesis we commonly come to a listening ear. We think, for example, that we know

much more about child-psychology than our forefathers did, but many a story in the Bible goes to the quick of a child's life. Once there was a boy named Samuel for whose coming his mother had prayed before he was conceived and who had been dedicated to the service of God while still she carried him beneath her heart, and who as a little child was carried to the Temple to serve the altar. So, that little lad, thus prepared, heard God talking to him in the night. This is an ancient story, but how timeless the record sounds: "And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel said, Speak; for thy servant heareth."

Moreover, not only does the genesis of great character commonly go back to such an experience, as many of us know well, but the maintenance of great character goes back to its repetition. Indeed, my sermon had come so far on when I remembered that somewhere in William James' "Psychology" there was a famous passage in which the essence of will was interpreted in terms of the capacity to pay attention, so that when we try to understand what free will is, the power of choice, we come at bottom to this mysterious faculty deep within us by which we pay attention to one thing rather than another—that is, give a hearing to this and not to that. So I turned to James' "Psychology" and found it: "Effort of attention is thus the essential phenomenon of will." What we give habitual hearing to within inevitably determines our choice.

Then to my amazed eyes the next sentences presented my sermon from a psychologist's point of view. For William James describes a man in a passion, the turbulence of cupidity or lust or temper noisy within him, in a fit mood to ruin himself withal and fighting off all listening to the cool, calm voices that would recover him from his unreason. Concerning this familiar situation James says: "Passion's cue accordingly is always and everywhere to prevent their still small voice from being heard at all," to which he significantly adds: "The strong-willed man . . . is the man who hears the still small voice unflinchingly."

Well, that is talking to us. That situation is reduplicated how many times in this company! On how many hearts are memories engraved of tragedy that need never have taken place if we had listened! What tragedies today are on their way, due to arrive tomorrow, that would never happen if some soul now would listen!

Strange, penetrating word of the Master, so often quoted, so little understood: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

IV

Finally, I do not see how any man can keep his chin up, maintain his courage and morale in a day like this, if he hears nothing but the noisy voices. As every one of us must have experienced, recovery of morale is not commonly associated with uproar but with quiet places. So the twenty-third Psalm strikes a universal note:

> He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
> He leadeth me beside still waters.
> He restoreth my soul.

Elijah himself was a whipped and beaten man when he left for the wilderness, a disillusioned public servant, a tired liberal, a disheartened prophet ready to quit, but he heard something in that still small voice that sent him back to his work again like an army with banners, his soul restored. He heard that, far from being alone, there was a strong minority in Israel which had not bowed the knee to Baal, that the cause he thought was lost need not be lost at all, that though he had been defeated in a moral battle he could still be victor in the moral war, and he came back to fight again with this conviction in his heart that the future of the world habitually belongs, not to the noisy forces, but to the still small voices.

I bring you that message as today we reunite our forces and walk out into one of the most turbulent epochs in human history. The wind, the earthquake, the fire are here. Alas, if the still small voice is not heard too!

Human history can be told in terms of the successive victories of quiet forces over their noisy enemies. Repeatedly in science as well as morals, in politics as well as religion, some new idea has come so silently that it caught at first but the inner ear of one who listened and then was heard by but a few, like the twelve disciples about our Lord in Galilee, and all around these still small voices raged the antagonistic world. But again and again the ultimate victory has gone, not to the shouts upon the street corner, but to the voice heard in the inner chamber, as Jesus said.

Has someone here been saying that the supreme need today is for courageous minds and for morale to build a better social order and a new international system? You know how cordially I agree with that. But because we do so desperately need men and women of undiscourageable faith and effort whom this world can neither whip nor tame we need this deeper thing we have been speaking of.

> Breathe through the heats of our desire
> Thy coolness and thy balm;
> Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
> Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
> O still small voice of calm!

Prayer

Eternal Spirit, we who have often spoken would more deeply learn to listen. Amid all our doing let not our hearing fail, and when the world clamors let there be within us every one a quiet voice that must be heard. Amen.

Front-Page Christianity

It should never be forgotten that Christianity did not come into the world through the editorial page; it came through the news column. It was a news event—front-page, stop-the-press news. Something happened. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The gospel was first preached as news. Whenever it has been preached with power, it has been preached as news. Whenever it has dwindled down to mere advice, become merely editorial Christianity, it has evaporated into a cloud as vague as fog.

Halford E. Luccock.

Is God Personal?

By James Austin Richards

I am God and not man. Hosea 11:9.

MORE and more I dislike sermon topics cast in the form of questions. Less and less do I think of the pulpit as a theological platform rather than as a place to attempt the stimulation of the living of the religious life. Yet this theme is in the form of a question, and no one can deny that it sounds like an adventure in theology. The adventure, however, seems to me to be justifiable on two grounds. One is that I hear this question asked almost more than any other in the field of religion, and asked by people who are intensely interested in the living of the religious life. The other is that one's answer to this question may have a deep effect on the living of that life.

Look at the contemporary religious scene. How many people are denying the personality of God! There is nothing perverse about them either, at least about many of them. Many are high-minded and devout. Many are sure that they are ennobling religion and not at all debasing it. One of the longest words that one hears in popular religious discussion is "anthropomorphic," and one most often hears it spoken with dislike. It means "man-formed," or "in the form of man." These friends feel it is an insult to Deity to let our thought of him be so man-formed, so in the form of man, as it commonly is.

The illustration of anthropomorphic talk of God that they most often supply is taken from childhood. We are reminded how children picture God. He is an old man. He is gigantic. Any coach would be glad to have him on the football squad. He is comfortably seated on pillows of clouds. His pose is heroic. His beard is long and white. He is as local as a sultan is local. He is benign to a degree, but usually has a sword somewhere about him. Surely, we are told (and I for one wholeheartedly agree), this is no adequate way to think of God—just an overgrown man. That (the word almost always follows), that is anthropomorphic. God can't be a person like that. We must rescue religion from this pettiness. We must stop talking of God as personal. Did not Hosea hear God saying nearly thirty centuries ago, "I am God and not man"? And is it not time we catch up with Hosea?

FINDING NEW TERMS FOR GOD

To be sure, it is somewhat difficult to talk about God without making him personal. There is the long racial habit to be overcome. There is also one's own childhood habit to be relinquished. Moreover, new terms are a little difficult to find, and if we are going to talk about God at all we have to talk about him in some terms. There are some who speak of God as a condition. Others speak of him as a force or a tendency or as the sum of all forces and tendencies. Yet others call him a process, perhaps the process of integration or the process of concretion. I speak of all this terminology with entire respect. I have no wish to disparage any truth that is thereby shadowed forth. I hold that God is the ultimate condition of all living and that we had better see him so; that he is forceful and has to do with tendencies; that he indwells and is often most revealed in such processes as those of integration or concretion.

Yet the new terms still have their difficulty for warm piety and religious practice. You can often tell a good deal about the living of the religious life by the language that is used in devotion and in prayer, and especially that which is used with ease and warmth. Many find it difficult to rewrite the twenty-third Psalm in these new terms. They find it hard to say, "A Condition is my shepherd," or "A Force restores my soul," or "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for a Tendency is with me," or "I shall dwell in the house of a Process forever." Many find it even more difficult to kneel and look up and say, "Our Condition which art in Heaven," or our Force or Tendency or Process. Therefore, in a multitude of cases (any pastor could name them if that were fair) this tendency to answer in the negative the question whether God is personal does put a blight on the personal religious life. One cannot honestly say that it does that in every case; one has to acknowledge that it does it in many. That seems a quite sufficient reason for trying to talk about this. However enthusiastic is one's ambition not to make the pulpit so much a lecture platform for the splitting of theological hairs as a place to attempt the stimulus of concrete religious living, yet, when one observes a growing thought habit that puts a blight on religious living in some of its most inner sanctuaries, one cannot easily ignore it, one cannot easily avoid asking what is to be said about it.

THINKING IN FORMS OF OURSELVES

Well, here is the first thing that it seems to me is to be said about it. It needs to be said guardedly lest at first it appears to be a reverting to the childhood picture of God as the big giant on the clouds, which it is not at all, or need not be. It does need to be said that the popular notion that the minute we can name any idea as anthropomorphic we have ruled it out from any healthy mind, is, by the very terms of thinking at all, an utterly misleading idea. It is an instance of the common assumption that we can settle arguments by calling names. We may gain infinitely by fleeing all crude anthropomorphism in our religious thinking—and in all our thinking, for that matter. I think that we do. But we do not thereby escape thinking in forms of ourselves. Since we are doing the thinking, we cannot think in any other way. If we examined carefully our conceptions of condition or force or tendency or process, they would turn out to be as truly man-made, as truly in man's form, as personality is assuredly so. I suppose that science, art and philosophy will all support the position that there is a great deal more of possible experience in the universe than we have ever realized.

You all recall the familiar story of the man who complained to the painter Turner, "I never see sunsets such as you paint," only to draw forth the answer, "Don't you wish you could?" The amount that each experienced was determined by the measure that each brought. Each thought in his own form. Each was anthropomorphic, whether he knew it or not, for each had to be

so. Our final choice is not whether we shall be anthropomorphic or not; it is not whether we shall think in human forms. Being human, we don't dodge doing that. Our final choice is as to what kind of anthropomorphism we shall nail our flag to, what kind of human form we shall espouse.

But, let me assert again, this is not driving us back to an infantile thought of God. This only relieves us from a paralyzing bugaboo, loosens up the whole topic, relieves the thought of the personality of God of an unfair handicap to which in many minds it has long been chained. It settles nothing but clears the pathway for possible advance.

ANSWERS IN THE NEGATIVE

The next thing that I think we need to grasp in this matter that has so much to do with practical religious living is a clear distinction among those who are trying to answer the question about God's personality in the negative. They come at the matter from absolutely opposite directions, as opposite as north and south, east and west. To give this point away at once, some deny that God is personal because they want to make him less than personal. And others deny that he is personal because they want to make him more. There could not be any distinction greater than that. To put it in another way, some are in a negative mood, and some are in an affirmative mood. These moods are opposites. Or yet again one may state it by saying that some are denying one thing and some are denying quite another.

Let us consider these two types for a minute. I am not talking about remote philosophical speculations. I am talking about ideas that you can meet anywhere as you go about our streets. Ask one man if God is personal, and when he says "No," he means that God is less than personal as we know personality in ourselves. God is in no sense an invisible, self-conscious unit, as we are. God cannot possibly say "I." To attribute any thought or feeling or purpose to him is out of the question. He is merely a condition about as space and time are conditions; or merely a force, much as gravity is a force; or merely a tendency, just as some materials tend to radiate; or merely a process, just as combustion is a process. In other words, he is less than we, who are self-conscious, who have the ability to say "I," who have some power to think and feel and purpose, who have a way of projecting ourselves around the world and out among the stars and back into dim antiquity and forward into the yet dimmer future.

THE CRUCIAL QUESTION

And now ask another man what he means when he answers the question whether God is personal in the negative. He does not mean what the first man meant at all. What he denies is that God is an old man sitting up among the clouds. What he denies is that God can ever be limited to our petty human measures. What he denies is that there are not reaches of God's being immeasurably beyond any of the ranges of personal life as we now know it in ourselves or can even dream it.

The first man replies "No" because he feels that if he said "Yes," he would make God too big. The second man replies "No" because he feels that if he said "Yes," he would make God too small. The difference is colossal. There is no language big enough to measure it. If individual confession has place in the pulpit, I cannot go with the first, but I feel that I can understand the second. I think Hosea was moving in this region when he reported hearing God say, "I am God and not man."

But if our thinking has been sound up to this point, it has only served to bring us at last up to the crucial question. If one cannot go with those who say that God is not personal because to say he is would make him too big, must one go with those who say they cannot call God personal because to do so would make him too small? I do not at all see why one must. I do not object to a man's calling God a condition so long as he recognizes that he is also more than that, or calling

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him a force or a tendency or a process, so long as he recognizes that he is more than these. I do not see why I should object when one calls God personal so long as it is recognized that he is more than personal by the petty standards of our attainment. Indeed, I see positive reasons for doing it.

Doomed from the start with failure in my effort to find any entirely adequate way of putting God into words, I shall yet not want to confine myself to the lesser words when I try to speak of him. Doomed from the start to failure in my effort to find any adequate way of conceiving God, I shall yet not want to confine myself to the lesser concepts when I do try to conceive him. He is God and not man. There is always going to be something that escapes and rebukes the littleness of my speech about him. There is always going to be something that escapes and rebukes the poverty of my thought about him. But still I want to choose one of the biggest and the richest of words when I do try to

speak of him and one of the biggest and richest of concepts when I do try to think about him. The biggest and the richest words I know are the words personal and personality. The biggest and the richest concept that I know is that of personality. It seems to me that, for the present at least, the production of personality has been the sublimest accomplishment in the historic process. So when I dare to think and speak of God, I pick out the most shining words I know. I interpret him in the terms of the most significant reality I know. I venture to call him personal. Of course I have to keep sending that word to the laundry to have it cleansed of all pettiness, all localness, all distortion. But I still feel that when I use it I am telling more of truth than of error. Indeed, I am telling more of truth than I can tell in any other way.

TEACHING CHILDREN CONCERNING GOD

The connection in which I have heard this subject most conscientiously debated is of course in the religious training of children. There have been too many cases where youth have carried the necessarily crude anthropomorphism of their childhood on into the adult years and then found it no longer tenable and as a result have thrown all religion away. That is tragedy indeed. It is tragedy so great that the fear of it has made some parents hesitate to speak of God to their children at all. Yet, I wonder. I wonder whether this is not like what the Germans have in mind when they talk of throwing out the baby with the bath. No children ever begin with adequate conceptions of parenthood or of native country. Do we therefore hide parenthood and native land away from them? We do not. We give them the best understanding of parenthood and of country of which they are capable and then take pains as they grow that their conceptions of these things shall grow with them with that progressive lopping off of error and filling up of truth that growth must always mean. We might go much further than we ordinarily do in saving our children from fixation on crude and inadequate thoughts of God, just like the mother whom I know who, when she found her children talking about Jack Frost, took pains to tell them that if they rose at midnight and pulled the shade aside and looked out, they would not see any impish figure stamping the mud into the hardness of frozen ground.

Our failure in the religious training of our children is not that we give them the thought of God too early. Our failure is that we vacate our responsibility to lead their thought ever onward into something ever more pure and majestic. We need always to emphasize that God is different from us, that God is more than we are, that he is God and we are men. Both our language and our thought of him will always be imperfect, but we may still ask whether if we tell our children that God is not personal, we do not tell them more of error than of truth. We may still ask whether if we tell them that God *is* personal, we are not telling them more of truth than error.

I said that one reason for talking about this question is that so many are asking it, and another that our answer to it has a bearing on concrete religious living. Life at its best is social. Religion at its best is social. I often recall the writer who almost defined religion as a social relation to the universe. It is hard to establish and maintain social relationships with a condition, or force, or tendency, or process. It is possible to establish and maintain a social relationship only with another person. It is possible to establish and maintain such a relationship even if he be infinitely greater than I am and at many points outreaches all my thought and speech.

Prayer and praise and fellowship, trust and love and intimacy all come back, even though He is God and I am man.

The Cross of Circumstance

By Raymond C. Burns

And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. Luke 23:26.

ALL our thoughts on Passion week march straight forward toward the cross. Even the triumphal note of Palm Sunday merely tends to heighten our feeling over what we know is to come. Not that the enthusiasm of Palm Sunday was without meaning. It certainly meant that the affection of the common man went out to the Master. But the crowd understood too imperfectly the implications of Jesus' ministry. Its passion for him was a recent experience, while it had habits of thinking and living which were the results of a lifetime and which were in some measure opposed to him. The crowd was enthusiastic but unorganized. Therefore, when authority and custom took a decisive step against the Master, his sympathizers could only follow the cross, weeping and beating their breasts.

The text this morning takes us straight to the scene toward which the events of the week are relentlessly moving: "And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus."

Now here, obviously enough, was a different cross from that which Jesus bore. To be sure the same physical materials were in it. It was the same burden of wood which our Lord carried, under which he stumbled, on which he died. But the spiritual aspects of this cross were altogether different. We read that Jesus steadfastly set his face to go up to Jerusalem knowing that there he must suffer the cross. That was true heroism! The youth of the world will always find its heart stirred first by the steady will and unfathomable courage of Jesus. It was conscious choice with Jesus. He could have escaped the cross. Instead he chose it. He could say, and no one who knew the facts could deny it: "No man takes my life from me. I lay it down myself." Jesus' cross was the cross of conscious choice.

The cross of Simon of Cyrene was the cross of *circumstance*. He did not choose it. He was impressed by the soldiers to bear it. Simon found his cross before he found

his Gethsemane. Let us remember that Gethsemane was not only a torture of the spirit; it was a preparation of the spirit for the cross. It was such a weighing of the spiritual ends at stake as would make a man strong, desperate to save his soul. Simon did not plan for his cross, foresee its difficulties, build up in himself a stronghold of dignity, poise and reserve. He came walking down the street, eager, enthusiastic and carefree, and in a moment the cross descended upon his shoulders. He must bear his cross. He might bear it abjectly and brokenly or nobly and victoriously. So much choice he had. But he *must* bear it.

AN UNCHOSEN CROSS

Let your imaginations take hold of this man on pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover, and experiencing instead the Passion. He came "up from the country." He was a devout Jew from the provincial town of Cyrene. He had come to Jerusalem for the holidays. It was a huge undertaking for him. He had saved for it. It meant sacrifices in the family. He had planned for it for years, thought of it, dreamed of it. Some day he was to see Jerusalem, but now that he was actually going it seemed too good to be true. It seemed to him that his highest religious aspirations would come true in Jerusalem. It was the religious capital of his race. The glory of the temple belonged to it, it was the center of Israel's ancient glory. It had been the forum of the prophets, the seat of the sacred law, and in it was the Holy Presence. In Simon moved the same forces that have taken loyal Zionists from comfortable places throughout the world to live in the arid desolation of Palestine.

I suppose we should only approximate Simon's feeling if we were to visualize the eagerness of some devout Christian going up to visit Nazareth, the boyhood home of our Lord, for the first time. It was to be to Simon the most cherished experience of a religious life. It was to be a never failing spring of water welling up in his spiritual life when he returned to the more prosaic and sometimes deadly dull life of the colonies. Simon was in Jerusalem to enjoy his religion. He wandered in with the crowd, feeling a little strange, but hopeful of the great experience. A soldier saw a figure at the edge of the crowd, a simple fellow "coming up from the country."

"And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus."

HOW TO LIVE NOW!

Here is an experience of Passion week which we have all seen or entered ourselves. In any account of the motives of men which bring men and women to this house of prayer on Palm Sunday morning, one will have to give a place to that great group which seeks in the way of prayer, strength of will and fortitude of spirit to bear its cross of circumstance. Perhaps one adventured into life with the gay courage of youth, or built for himself in middle age a solid place of integrity and influence, when tragic circumstance pressed suddenly and heavily upon his unprepared life. How to live now! How to live now without deceiving one's self as to the facts or surrendering one's self to the hard forces! How to live like priests and kings, conquerors and more than conquerors through him who loved us!

One does not have to strive to prove this an abiding experience of men, but we must be careful to have it understood that we are dealing with real tragedies this morning. We are not giving refuge to those souls who make mountains out of molehills in all spiritual difficulties. Surely during Passion week, with one-third of the Gospels bearing graphic testimony to the magnitude of the cross on Calvary, no one is going to mistake for a cross one of life's minor accidents. And yet, we would better be careful. It is a temptation to the soul in the least inclined toward self-pity. If we can only dignify little troubles with the heroism of the cross, how we seem to grow in stature! The aged Dr. Curry used to tell with great glee of the man who could "say nothing as if it weighed a ton." It is likewise possible to bear life's minor burdens with bent shoulders and tragic face as if one were bearing a cross. And especially in our social troubles we would better be careful to see that we are not wearing a chip on our shoulders instead of bearing a cross on our backs.

THE CROSS OF CONSCIOUS CHOICE

And I think it is to be understood likewise that because a man bears the tragic cross of circumstance upon his shoulder he is not released thereby from the duty of taking up the cross of conscious choice. I strongly suspect that the man is not spiritually awake who does not sometime meet the dilemma where he must either save himself from sacrifice and so lose himself or else lose himself in conscious sacrifice and so save himself. Many a man who has learned to bear well his particular cross of circumstance, feels that when he has done that "it is finished." He pours all the secretions of his life upon his one problem and produces one pearl. He feels that he has borne his cross, and it is enough. It isn't enough. The cross goes all the way to Calvary and the end.

It is death to be morally satisfied. If, having found out how to bear the cross of circumstance for himself, a man is not impelled to take up the cross of conscious sacrifice for others, then his cross has conquered him. Gradually it has beaten courage and conscience from him until ease and favor are to him greater ends than justice and mercy.

Indeed right here, in accepting the cross of conscious sacrifice, is one of the surest ways of becoming more than conqueror over the cross of circumstance. When John Bright's young wife died after a brief and happy marriage the cross of circumstance descended heavily upon his shoulders. It was too awful, too desperately meaningless. He felt that the very heart of life had stopped beating for him. Then a friend came to him and, after speaking some words of consolation, he said, in substance: "There are homes in England bereaved and in poverty through no fault of their own. I advise you, after the first shock of your grief is passed, to come with me and we will not rest until the Corn Laws are repealed." Lifted upon the cross of conscious choice, John Bright overcame the cross of circumstance.

The experiments of the religious ascetics have demonstrated that nobility of life results not from sheltering life from the shock of human problems but from expos-

ing one's self to them. The Monastery of Mar Saba is a living, though somewhat decrepit, witness to the folly of the sheltering ideal. Mar Saba is situated on the Wady of Fire between Jerusalem and the Dead sea. Here, in the fifth century A. D., St. Euthymius gathered a company of monks, among them his favorite pupil, Sabbas. It was Sabbas who organized the monastery whose building now overhangs the Wady of Fire. When Dr. Fosdick visited the monastery it was cared for by about thirty-five monks. Now it might well be judged off hand that, theoretically, fleeing from life problems would not be attractive to Americans or to those in touch with American ideals and that, practically, Mar Saba was far enough away to have no connection with us.

RAYMOND C. BURNS

However, of those thirty-five monks one had been for some years a fruit seller in Salem, Massachusetts, and the "long-haired, long-bearded, frowzy member" who opened the door to Dr. Fosdick's party was a naturalized citizen of the United States, who for ten years had been a fireman in New York and Chicago hotels. "That strenuous occupation proving too absorbing to admit of fasting and prayer—so he said—he had, for his soul's sake, retired to this place where he need attend to nothing else." Both the man from Salem and the fireman from New York agreed that it was easier to be Christian at Mar Saba than at their former tasks. So they lived day by day with nothing more strenuous to do than to say their ritual and to abstain from meat. Dr. Fosdick in one sharp sentence, in his "Pilgrimage to Palestine," says all that need be said about them or their type: "If hard and honest work interfere with Christianity they should indeed be saintly now."

There is no worth or dignity in such sheltered, useless holiness.

And yet we must admit that bearing the cross of circumstance also seems to subtract dignity from a man. Jesus, going up to Calvary, was an heroic figure. His friends sorrowed for him. Vicariously they suffered every pang of his torture. Yet somewhere in their minds was mystified awe. He was dignified in his suffering. He had chosen it. Had he not said, "I go up to Jerusalem to be crucified"? Not so with Simon. He was a pathetic figure. He was not an heroic figure going to an heroic death for great principles and with a great purpose. He had not chosen his cross. He was the plaything of forces he could not control. "They *laid hold* on one Simon, a Cyrenian, and on him they laid the cross." Simon had not chosen his cross. He *must* bear his cross. It subtracted at first all dignity, poise, reserve.

THE DIGNITY OF SUFFERING

An eyewitness once told me of seeing a man caught by a river in freshet. The man was out in the middle of the stream clinging to a log. The waves tossed him and the current swirled him about at its pleasure. Meanwhile men followed him along the stream on horseback, pushed far out into the current, risked their lives in a dozen desperate schemes. There were anxious folk along the bank who watched the rescuers, but the eyewitness said: "I never felt such helpless pity as I did for that man caught in that terrible stream. There was *nothing he could do.*" He was no longer but a little lower than the angels, the captain of his fate, with power to do as he willed.

If more pity was felt for him than for the rescuers who desperately rushed into danger, it was because he *must,* but they *chose.*

The futility of man is what the literature of a decade ago saw first of all in the cross of circumstance. The heroic Fate of tragedy has become a little, malevolent fate spelled with a small "f." There is no dignity in the suffering of "Main Street" or "Arrowsmith." The scientist who fought commercialism for pure science and truth is gradually beaten down by his cross until at last, when he is advanced to a position of power where his influence could mean everything to science and truth, he himself succumbs to commercialism and sinks into senility. It is a man bearing the cross of his time because he must bear it, and then selling his soul for thirty pieces of silver; it is the betrayal, not in Gethsemane, but after the cross.

Well, if that is true, renounce forever all hope of progress and righteousness. But it is not true. The cross of circumstance may, too, be an heroic climb to the conquest of the forces that would hedge our spirits and warp our souls.

The cross of circumstance may share some of the glory of the cross of conscious choice.

BEARING THE CROSS OF TODAY

Think of the history of the leper colony in the Hawaiian Islands. Here is Father Damien taking up his cross of choice and going to live with his lepers. Day by day the carpenter-priest works with them, and touches over the tools as they work his "bruised and

bleeding hands" to their maimed stumps. Then one terrible day he goes climbing up the hills to find a sanitary water supply. He sits down to rest and takes his shoes from his hot, tired feet. There is an ugly laceration on one heel. He touches it. There is no feeling in it! Leprosy! It is terrible, but it is meaningful and heroic. It is glorious! But what of lepers, already dying with the disease, who yet lived hopefully under Father Damien, and worked with their deformed hands to make the colony a happier place? Not from choice did they come there, but they were glorious just the same. And, depend upon it, there were such men. Father Damien did a great work and such work is not done without the cooperation of other men. They were, perhaps, horribly disfigured in body, but they were not disfigured in soul.

When we think of the cross we think of Florence Nightingale "taking on herself the tragedy of battlefields which she had never caused." But just so the war descended on the shoulders of ordinary men. They had not caused it. They were playthings of forces over which they had no control. The war maimed and battered them. It shocked their souls until some of them became quivering wrecks of men. It suggested to them with insidious and continual temptation that there were only two or three great motives for living and that those were bestial. Some men it crushed so that in any valid study of our conduct for years to come we must have to take into account the disillusionment that followed the World War. But some it could not crush. Some took up the cross of circumstance, bore it for themselves, and yet had a shoulder ready to bear that of others. No one wants a war to create heroes; there are more sane and less wasteful ways in peace. Yet we cannot forget that some, in the midst of hate about them, learned to look on men with profound love and pity, like Donald Hankey, who testified: "I have seen men through the eyes of God."

LIFE'S GREAT ADVENTURE

Yet, after all has been said, the cross remains always a great adventure. One cannot guarantee any element in it but that integrity which is satisfied to know that it never surrendered altogether to the ignoble. It *must* begin in pain, it *may* grow to an exalted peace, it will most certainly result in the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby. If it is to have the heroism of the cross of Christ it must also have the spiritual daring of Christ who did not seek for victory *for* himself but only for integrity *in* himself.

> . . . it can't be proved.
> How can you prove a victory before
> It's won? How can you prove a man who leads
> To be a leader worth the following,
> Unless you follow to the death . . . ?
> Well—God's my leader, and I hold that He
> Is Good, and strong enough to work his plan
> And purpose out to its appointed end.
> . . . I bet my life on beauty, truth
> And love; not abstract, but incarnate truth;
> Not beauty's passing Shadow, but its self,
> Its very self made flesh—love realized,
> I bet my life on Christ, Christ crucified.

Is Religion Necessary?

By Vere V. Loper

BRUCE CURRY addresses as many college audiences as any religious leader of America today. He states that students always ask him two questions: "Is Christianity possible?" and "Is religion necessary?" We direct our attention this morning to the second question. There are a considerable group of people who are convinced that religion is no longer necessary. Some of them dismiss it with contempt as passé. They affirm that intelligent people have outgrown religion. This attitude is frequently expressed by intellectuals. Many cub professors with shining new Ph.Ds view religion with a compassionate smile. Mr. Mencken's message does not carry the same weight in a day of economic disaster that it did in the midst of complacent prosperity. Yet he does represent a type of journalist who loves to bait preachers and churches whether or not they are in the Bible Belt.

Some dismiss religion with sadness. They believe that they gave it a fair trial and it failed them in their emergency. Without any bitterness, they part from religion as from an old friend. But the great numerical majority of American people, who feel that religion is no longer necessary, is made up of those who have drifted into an indifference which has no intellectual and experiential foundation. When they get into difficulty they cry out with the sailors in Shakespeare's Tempest, "To prayers, to prayers, all is lost." But as soon as the tempest passes, they forget God until they get into difficulty again.

The answer as to whether religion is necessary will of course depend upon what religion is. Christians can not be unaware of the fact that religion has been so defined that it is passé for the educated mind of today. None of us would accept religion as necessary if it must include the discarded science of the eighteenth century, the outgrown social objectives of medieval Europe, the passing political forms of the Roman Empire, and the fallacies of ancient philosophy. We would dismiss Christianity as quickly as does Mr. Lippmann, if we agreed that he was correct in identifying it with obsolete political and social forms.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

But Christianity is not what Mr. Lippman says it is. The fact that we have outgrown religion as some conceive it, does not mean that we have outgrown religion. There can be no absolute agreement on what religion is. But it does have an accepted meaning which is fairly well represented by the definition which I ask you to make the basis of our thought. "Religion is the concept we form of the power which is responsible for our being, our relation to that power, and the course of life which results from that conception and relation." Such a definition makes it clear that religion is not a theory which we are at liberty to accept or reject. Religion is a name for a reality which none can escape. It starts with ourselves. Something must have brought us into being. It is this power which becomes the primary concern of religion. As we en-

deavor to think of this power, some will call it "process" and others will call it God. For our present concern, it does not matter where this thought issues, it is religion. Religion proceeds as we discover and establish our relationships to this power, which to the Christian is God. Finally, religion will always culminate in a method of living which is the logical and inevitable outcome of our thought about and our relationship to the power which made us.

For the Christian, religion will find its outcome in the Jesus way of living.

Is religion necessary? Our first answer is that we may be totally unconscious of the presence of any religion in our life, but it will be present to the extent

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that we touch life at any point which has been affected by the presence of religion in it.

We will touch life at these points where we come in contact with the intelligence which is expressed everywhere in nature. This intelligence is manifested not only in human beings but in the lower forms of life. Here is a swarm of bees. Examine them with Maeterlinck! You will see an intelligence at work in the swarm, which is not manifest in any individual bee. The bee cannot overcome the least obstacle, but the swarm demonstrates an organization and intelligence which is a marvel of nature. Where does this intelligence reside? What is this will which is so busily engaged in making honey? "It resides in nature," says the scientist. "It is God," says the Christian.

What is manifest in the bee, can be seen at many points in nature; intelligence at work in creative activity. When we touch this intelligence, whether in plants, birds, animals or men, we have come into contact with the power through which we were made. We have found religion in our own lives. If this intelligence could speak to us out of the creatures of nature as it did to Augustine, we would hear it say, "He made us."

RELIGION IN NATURE

We go back to our world and discover beauty. We see it in nature but it is expressed supremely through the works of man. Let us follow R. F. Horton for a moment. He tells of visiting the gallery where the pictures of Holman Hunt were exhibited. "I did not know Holman Hunt. But after studying 'The Lady of Shalott,' 'The Shadow of the Cross,' and, above all, that masterpiece, the portrait of himself, I might with some justice say that I did know him. As the painter of those pictures, as the brain teeming with ideas of truth and beauty, as the face he showed to the public in his portrait, he is more familiar to me than many people I have met." So we touch God in the great gallery of his world whether we will or not. We witness the expression of his beauty in mountains and men to match the mountains. We confront his supreme self-portraiture in Jesus. We cannot avoid this beauty of our world if we have eyes to see, and we cannot avoid the God whose expression that beauty is. We may not open the door and invite him into our house, but we cannot close the door to his unseen presence.

Religion becomes inevitable when we touch the goodness of our world. America could not escape religion when it had Lincoln as its President. Art could not escape religion when Rembrandt painted Jesus among the lowly. Mendelssohn voiced as a young man his passionate desire to compose a religious masterpiece. When he finished "Elijah," no man could escape religion who listened appreciatively to its rendition. We touch the goodness of the world in the kindly ministry of all who love us. The power that draws life together into these gentle ministries of love is what our modern religious thinkers mean by God. Everyone knows this God. "We touch him in life's throng and press, and we are whole again."

A man may deny that there is any such thing as water, but his denial is not important if he is refreshed by it. A man may deny that there is any such thing as food, but if his body is strengthened by it, his denial will not be important. Many men deny that there is such a value as religion. But when they are blessed every day by the intelligence, the beauty, and the goodness of the world, their denial cannot be taken very seriously. It is the facts of any situation which are important. The fact is that any man who touches the universe at its best has been compelled to accept religion as a necessary factor in his life.

FACING LIFE'S DEEPEST QUESTIONS

Again religion becomes necessary when you face the great fundamental questions of life which lie beyond the scope of the physical sciences. It has been suggested that science has made religion passé. Science has cleansed religion of ignorance and superstition, but the physical sciences have not even entered the fields where the primary concerns of religion are to be found. When

you do confront the great basic questions of life, religion becomes necessary.

I do not claim that we must decide these fundamental problems in harmony with the existence of a power which we choose to call God. I do suggest that in the ultimate analysis all decisions on major life problems will be influenced by an affirmation or denial of God.

BELIEF AND THE WILL

"The Will to Believe," by William James, ranks high in modern philosophic literature. James states in this essay that theoretically there are three attitudes which you can take toward God. You are a believer who accepts God, an agnostic who is in doubt, or an atheist who denies the existence of God. He states, however, that there is no practical difference between agnosticism and atheism. In both cases you think and act on the assumption that there is no God. In no case do you escape religion. The great questions are decided either on the basis of an affirmation or denial of religion. This is probably what led Chesterton to say that it is more important for a landlady to know whether her prospective lodger believes in God than to know how much money he has in his pocket.

Some of the most important questions of life concern those aspects of our existence over which we have no control. Religion must deal with all such questions, and especially with death. You must meet this grim fact on a religious basis or not at all. Every significant statement about death will ultimately prove to be either an affirmation or denial of God. A scientist who seeks hope at the door of death, must leave his science and launch out into the depths of faith. Some of the greatest scientists have had the courage to do this. The French people have voted Pasteur supreme honors as their greatest citizen and President Eliot called him the greatest scientist of the nineteenth century. The great educator goes on to describe the scene where Pasteur stood beside the deathbed of his little girl. He ceased to be a man of science and yielded himself to his vital religious life in these words: "I know only scientifically determined truth, but I am going to believe what I wish to believe, what I cannot help but believe. I expect to meet this dear child again in another world." Death is only one of the many inescapable experiences of life which must be met on the religious plane or not at all.

WHAT DOTH IT PROFIT?

When you endeavor to determine what really counts in life, you find religion sitting in the seat of judgment. Questions of value lie at the heart of religion. They are religion according to some definitions. A man may be convinced that material accumulations are of primary importance. But in the moment of his apparent success, he is very apt to hear a voice: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?"

In Colorado we are greatly concerned about silver. We do not care about what silver is. We are interested in what silver is worth. The welfare of our basic mining industry depends upon the value of our metals. There are times when we are more concerned with the relative values of life than we are in what life is. Then we turn with gratitude to religion which says: "The first and great commandment is . . . the second is. . . ." In great moments we pause amid our hurry to ask, "What is really worth while in life?" In those moments we have turned to religion in one of its most vital aspects whether we know it or not.

Again, we cannot answer the profound questions in regard to the ends and goals of life apart from reference to religion. Science can give us better means of accomplishing our purposes, but religion determines to what end we shall work. I am especially interested in Thoreau, because I recently had the opportunity to make my first visit to Walden Pool. As I saw that beautiful little New England lake beside which the companion of Emerson spent so many happy hours, I thought again of his restlessness in regard to material progress. I am not a prophet but I was certain I could make a fair guess as to how Thoreau would have described the speed boat which circled the lake. "Improved means to an unimproved end" were his words on another occasion.

WE HAVE PROGRESSED—WHY?

Here is the paradox of our world. We have made vast improvements in the means by which things are done but attained little progress in the ends to be served. Napoleon killed his thousands, but with the help of science we kill our tens of thousands. But we have found no better purposes to be served through the slaughter of war. We can take our old friend, the Oriental, to the top of the Empire State Building in an elevator which saves three minutes. But when he inquires what we will do with the three minutes, we have no reply.

When we grow weary of millions spent on "improved means to an unimproved end," perhaps we will be ready for the question as to the ultimate purpose of these improved means. When you have launched out into the ends and goals of life, you have launched into the depths of religion. Your answers will depend upon whether there is a God and how you are to conceive of him and relate yourself to him.

Religion is necessary if you would live life at its best. It is possible to exist without any consciously developed religious life. Some very fine people do. They keep out of jail. They are good to their families. They are considered good citizens. Some of them attain higher standards than church people. But they are not living life at its best for them. The question is not always what a man is. The profounder inquiry is, "What could and should a man be if he realized his fullest possibilities?"

Religion is necessary for this life. Trench suggests the resources of religion for life at its best in his lines:

> Lord, what a change within us one short hour
> Spent in Thy presence will avail to make!
> What heavy burdens from our bosoms take!
> What parched grounds refresh as with a shower!
> We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
> We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
> Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear:
> We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!
> Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
> Or others—that we are not always strong—
> That we are sometimes overborne with care—
> That we should ever weak or heartless be,

Anxious or troubled—when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee.

We are increasingly realizing that it is the business of religion to make available the materials of a richer and finer life. A miner discovers the gold and the silver in the hills and brings them forth to take their place in the world. Religion uncovers the gold and silver of the spiritual realms of life and makes them available to men. Religion is a definite technique to deliver power at the point of life where it is needed.

Our poem speaks of this technique of religion in terms of prayer. Many have dismissed prayer without any understanding of what it is and how it can enable them to live life at its best. Prayer can mean to the exhausted soul what an irrigation ditch means to a dry land farmer. It is the channel by which the "joy and strength and courage" which are in God can be made to water the parched ground of the human soul.

DR. WIEMAN ON PRAYER

Dr. H. N. Wieman gives an interpretation of prayer which represents a new and helpful approach. Those who have followed it have found that instead of outgrowing prayer, they have not grown up to it. He suggests that prayer consists of five definite steps. First, we should relax physically and become aware of that upon which we are dependent. Second, we should call to mind the vast and unimaginable possibilities for good which are found in God. What could he not mean to us? Third, we should confront the problems in our own lives against this vast background of potential power. Prayer is partially a method of problem solving. Fourth, we should ask what changes must be made in our mental attitudes and personal habits. The power of God cannot flow to us unless we build our irrigation ditches. The results of prayer will depend more upon us than upon God. He is always ready to come into our lives if we will create the conditions which will enable him to come. Fifth, we must definitely formulate in words just what we propose to do to close the gap between us and God that he may flood our life with power at the point where we need help.

The suggestions of Dr. Wieman will be found helpful to many who have not obtained from religion and prayer the strength which they need. The final step in any religion is always the life which grows out of our relationship to God. Religion is seen increasingly as a technique to assist men to live life at its best. If men are able to do this as individuals, it is apparent that the highest possibilities of our social order also will be consummated when men link themselves to the power which religion can generate to solve the problems of war, race relations, industrial conflict, and economic security.

Religion—genuine, vital religion—is necessary for life at its best.

Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others—that we are not always strong. . . .

That we may attain to the highest that is possible for us and our world, let us therefore ask and we shall receive, seek and we shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto us.

The Christian God

By Frederick F. Shannon

Treat one another with the same spirit as you experience in Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:5. (Moffatt's Translation)

THESE words compose the first note of the Pauline theology-anthem which hymns the Christian God. Without delaying to remind ourselves that Philippians 2:5-11 is not the only kenotic passage in the New Testament, it is perhaps the *locus classicus* in its order because it utters the truth of all the rest. Moreover, it focuses the Christian ethic and metaphysic in profound fashion. Always inseverable, the continuing menace from the first century to the present is the attempt—honest, subtle, persistent and brilliant—to divorce these two aspects of the Christian God. For the God revealed in Christ is at once, if we shift from theology to philosophy, transcendent *and* immanent, not transcendent *or* immanent. No matter what the creative mystery of water may be, we might as well try to separate water from its basic gases, hydrogen and oxygen, as to separate Christian ethics from Christian metaphysics. As a matter of fact, it is the experience of God in Christ which accounts for about two-thirds of all the good and bad theology ever written. But that which we may call good theology is the Christian experience overflowing into and creating the noblest thought-system the living Lord has produced through the human mind. Just so, Paul *plays up* the Christian ethic in time because he and his fellow believers have been *played into* by the Christian metaphysic out of eternity.

I

First of all, let us think of *the Christian God Before Time.* Is not the manner in which Paul introduces his subject calmly astonishing? Consider well how he mingles the ethical and the super-ethical, the humanly personal and the divinely personal. "Treat one another with the same spirit as you experience in Christ Jesus." In amazing brevity of statement, we are face to face with nothing less than the compelling and intervitalizing awe of Deity, Duty and Destiny. For the God of Christ and God in Christ instruments himself, so to speak, in the actual human order through Christianized human beings in Philippi, or Rome, or London or Chicago. This meaning is clean, clear-cut, inescapable, however mysterious, majestic and incomprehensible.

But the Reality in which the meaning is grounded is also stated with trenchant, powerful and arresting masterfulness. "Though he was divine by nature, he did not set store upon equality with God, but emptied himself by taking the nature of a servant." Is it not quite beyond uninspired human capacity to focus the ethical and metaphysical aspects of the Christian God in a more intensely personal, individual, social and ageless manner?

Now, what is the spiritual-fact-process—if I may so express it? First, we must consider the specific Person to whom Paul is referring. Well, we say, truly his words are referable to God. Then this question at

once flashes out: To what feature or aspect of the Godhead does he refer? Certainly, if language counts for anything, it is not to God the Father nor yet to God the Holy Spirit. So there is no question but that the Son of God—the eternally filial in the Godhead—is signified.

"*He* (Christ Jesus, not merely Jesus Christ) *was divine by nature.*" Yet, being who and what he is by nature, he begins the actualization in time, space and history, the most inconceivable and momentous movement and purpose within the moral universe. And he achieves this through a tremendous negative plus a stupendous positive. Divine by nature, he does *not* set store upon equality with God—here is an absolute negative, if there ever was one. Of course definition not only becomingly but necessarily falters before all interiors of the Godhead; yet I think we must say that the *nature of God is more than his attributes,* even as the sun is more than his beams or rays.

Now, psychologically, an attribute is defined as "any one of the ways, as intensity, duration, quality, in which one sensation, image or feeling can differ from another." This may illustrate, in picturesque word-forms, the distinctions of Persons within the Godhead. Substitute Person for Sensation, and is there not a suggestion of the ways by which God, in his personal intensity, duration, quality and feeling, differentiates his Individual and Social Being by *threeing* himself, to borrow Bushnell's word, into the physical, intellectual and spiritual universe?

GOD IS ETERNALLY LOVE

On the other hand, an eternal positive is stated in the words, he "emptied himself by taking the nature of a servant." Unable to plumb the depths, scale the heights, or measure the breadths of meaning within the Kenosis, we may be sure of this: By emptying himself and taking the nature of a servant, God does not, if I dare say it, *denaturize* himself, because such a thing is morally impossible to the Christian God. The God-Christ takes the universe to himself, in creative order, by physical laws; and without undeifying the Godhead, he takes humanity to himself in the Incarnation by laws at once moral, recreative and redemptive.

What is the religious value of the Christian God before time? Supremely, this: *God is Love.* God did not become love at the Incarnation; it is then that he manifests in unique fashion the love which he eternally is. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Yet merely to say God is Love is not enough. Even the reality within the saying falls short of its end until it roots in our individual being and fruits in our social relations. But this thought leads us directly to the nature of God. For, if God is Love, and not just loving and lovable, he must be social in the very structure of his being. And is not this the fact unfolded and unfolding by Christianity at its New Testament and historical best? God is an eternal society in himself. And, logically as well as transcendently, he is social independently of all created societies—whether they be a universe of social forces or all intelligences as a society of moral beings. Yet because any or all societies bear the impress of God's social being does not, cannot, cancel his pre-temporal and increated social nature.

Well, then, what constitutes *That?* Nearly twenty centuries of revelation and experience have affirmed, and in the face of all denials of yesterday and today, that Father, Son and Spirit are the structural reality within the Godhead. In other words, if God is Love, he cannot be less but more than human love which requires both subject and object—the lover-subject with his beloved object. Thus within and behind the Son God *sent* is the Eternal Son loved by the Eternal Father. But why did God send him? Why did he deliberately come? "To be the propitiation for our sins." That is God's self-defining and yet humanly indefinable answer. We may rub out the inspired words but we cannot rub out the man-deep reality! So, let us appropriate all suggestive and useful categories furnished by science, psychology, philosophy and theology. Yet it behooves us to ponder well and inwardly digest this truth: The most brilliant categories cannot be substituted for consciences horribly dead in sin, and, therefore, in desperate need of being made gloriously alive unto God in his propitiating and Christian Saviorhood.

FREDERICK F. SHANNON

II

Consider, now, the *Christian God in Time.* "Born in human guise and appearing in human form, he humbly stooped in his obedience even to die, and to die upon the cross." This is seemingly a kind of second strain in Paul's Christocentric strophe; or, in mixed metaphor, it is a divine spiral inwardly unwinding itself from the Eternal Center named God outwardly to his Temporal Circumference in the whole creation, at once an infolding and unfolding movement even as

it is a descending and ascending process in the Symphony of Redemption.

THE DEITY-IN-HIMSELF

Again: What is the spiritual-fact-event here? Is it at all possible, without irreverently and presumptuously trespassing upon the inscrutable mysteries of the Divine Being, imperfectly to formulate what this imperial thinker and seer is driving at in his desperation to utter the unutterable? Without daring, even by implication, to make theologians and philosophers responsible for my viewpoint, I think this Christian apostolic revelation of the-thing-in-itself, or, rather, of the-Deity-in-Himself, is packed with uniqueness of content and it is also thrillingly alive with the forthright joyousness and wonder of it all.

As a youngster, I read a sermon on "The Grandeur and Condescension of God," by Bishop Bascom. The theme is about all I remember, with the possible exception of the stately eloquence by which I was moved without fully understanding its thought-content. Now, I like to synonymize the Volition of God with his Condescension. Thus, in the time-process, God *wills* to be born; God *wills* to grow; God *wills* to learn; God *wills* for our sakes to become poor that we through his poverty might become rich; God *wills* to die, and to die upon the cross for human sin; God *wills* to rise from the dead; God *wills* to ascend within the unseen universe out of which he came into time, earth and humanity.

Call this Patripassianism, that heresy of the third and later centuries, if you choose. Identifying the Father and the Son as two expressions, modes or manifestations of the same God, this forces us to the conclusion that the Father was born, suffered and died. Yet so great a theologian, scholar and teacher as A. B. Bruce held that "Patripassianism is only half a heresy." At any rate, we must agree, I think, with Principal Forsyth, who was not only a theologian but a theologician, when he says: "If the Infinite God was so constituted that he could not live as finite man, then he is not infinite." And just because he can, and does, live as finite man, the Christian God becomes "infinitely near," in the golden phrase of Dean Hough. I do not wonder, therefore, that Bishop McConnell profoundly says: "The revelation of the revelation of Christ may continue indefinitely." Why not? The discovery of the discovery of the universe is certain to continue indefinitely. Therefore, is it irrational to conclude that the revelation of the revelation of the Being through whom all things are created and in whom all things cohere or hold together, will continue not only indefinitely but through time and eternity?

WHERE MODERNISM ERRS

Meantime, is not Principal Forsyth solemnly right? We may revamp old phrases as we will and invent new ones as we choose; we may exchange the idea of Substance for Personality and Personality for Will as the World-ground; we may continue to teach culture and preach sentimentalisms and talk about illumination and inspiration; we may produce a blend of the liberal-evangelical even as we go beyond modernism or fall behind fundamentalism; we may strenuously assert the necessity of individual and social relations, and all in their proper order; we may delude ourselves by closing with a kind of 57-variety cult medium which cannot possibly disclose the One Mediator between God and man: these and other things we may do, many of which are more or less good as such goodness goes. Nevertheless, so long as we try to interpret the Christian God from "the Man upward" instead of "the God downward," we shall terribly bereave ourselves of the Christ-God's saving grace operating from within outward. Having, actually, a de-christianized center we must have a tragically de-christianized circumference,

A Pastoral Prayer

By Toyohiko Kagawa

O GOD our Father: We thank Thee that through the blood of the Cross Thou dost cleanse our sins, forgive our shortcomings, and purify us. Even when we are in revolt against Thee, Thou dost have compassion on us. Even when we blindly grovel in sin, Thou dost have pity upon us.

We praise Thy love which melts our hearts, hardened into rock by evil heredity and crime, and purifies and revitalizes them once more.

We confess the sins of our modern age. The world today has gone deep into partnership with crime; we are repeating the wickedness of the days of Rome. O purify us that we may enter fully into the consciousness of the blood of the Cross and forgive the sins of men for the sake of the new age that is to come. Inspire us to strive to build a road of righteousness that man may walk thereon. Create us anew into men and women worthy of having received the redemption of the blood of the Cross and lead us so that we also may be able to live lives of loving service, lives actuated by the principle of the blood.

We bless Thee for granting us redemption through the blood in this depraved age in which we live. The joy of redemption is more precious to us than precious jewels.

Make us believe Thy mercy and cause us to stand on our feet, and bestir ourselves in cleansing our homes, and our nation. Give us the strength to purify our country, and our society. Cleanse our industries, purify us from the spirit of selfishly seeking the interests of our own class, and help us to enter into the feelings of the heart of God.

Grant that we may hold fast, we beseech Thee, in unswerving determination to our resolution to follow the way of the Cross. We pray this through the blood. Amen.

evidences of which are seen in our semi-pagan individual ideals and worse than pagan international practices.

Now, in physical and mental evolution we move from the inorganic to the organic, from the organic to consciousness, from consciousness to personality, from personality to individuality. But the reverse is the method of God in revelation. There we see an essential infolding before there is, or can be, creative and historic unfolding of his redemptional Will. Expressing himself as God the Creator of the universe, we then behold something more wonderful still: Issuing from the interiors of the Godhead, which the cosmos could not express, we see God the Father come forth in God the Son. Thus, the angels sang over the advent of the Divine Saviorhood.

But when even one sinner repents the ever-tuneful chorus sings again. Therefore, the Central Chorus of the Universe must be always on duty; for we are all not only sinners, but each of us is a specialist in sin. Our specialty may be of an intellectual, sensual, avaricious, selfish, wishful-thinking, or other type. None the less, it is a penetrating and far-sounding discord in the symphony of salvation. And what if it costs the Christian God infinitely more to make a single human discord melodious than it does to make the music of the spheres? I believe this moral costliness, redemptional and ingenerative, is implicit in the unplumbed depths of sin's black and withering warp in the soul—a warp whose moral twist can be straightened and vitalized only by the dread reality of propitiating love within the Godhead. And for its creation-crowning achievement a faithworthy God gave not a universe of matter and energy, nor even fifty generations of critical, uncritical and subcritical thought—worthful as it may or may not be. Rather, God gave, and still gives, his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. By the grace of God, the moral act of really believing on his only begotten Son is greater by far than intellectually mastering all that has been said and written about him and still remaining spiritually unbegotten by him.

III

Finally, Paul thinks of the *Christian God Beyond Time*. "Therefore God raised him high and conferred on him a Name above all names, so that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bend in heaven, on earth and underneath the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Thus is the divine self-emptying also the divine self-fulfilling.

Beyond time, yet God in Christ is always within time through the spiritual-fact-process. What is this self-realizing truth in the text as well as in the New Testament context? First, Incarnation: "The Logos was made flesh." Second, Death: "Christ died for our sins." Third, Resurrection: "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Fourth, Ascension: "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven." Fifth, Sovereignty: "And sat down at the right hand of God." Sixth, Omnipresence: "And I will be with you all the time, to the very end of the world." Thus the Christian God before time, and in time, is now beyond time only that he may indwell souls by a method-process more spiritual, more universal, and more concretely personal.

What a God, what a Lord, what a Savior, what a Friend!

Albert E. Day says, in his brilliant and helpful book, "Jesus and Human Personality," that he was appealed to by a brother-minister as he left for New Haven to deliver the lectures which are reproduced in the book, not to "shy away from the deity of Jesus." "I have not used that phrase at any time during this series," he says, "and I cannot. It has so many confusing connotations. The eternal God was not and cannot be completely localized in any human figure."

GOD IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST

"Right," I wrote on the margin of the page I was reading, "but wrongfully right." For while the Eternal God cannot be completely localized in any human figure, he can and was and is completely localized in the *Divine-Human Figure* named the Son of Man because he is the Son of God. And he localizes himself in all individual and social economies solely because he is divine by nature. Therefore, he is the Eternalizing Reality, the Infinitely Personal God, in whom we have our redemption. Believing this, I also wrote on the margin of the selfsame page these words of the English philosopher, Francis H. Bradley: "Not to know how a thing can be done is no disproof that the thing must not be and is." Still having room on the margin, I also transcribed the suggestive words of Cyril H. Valentine: "The one fact in the whole universe which brings us nearest to the nature of God is the Person of Christ." Then, having exhausted the margin of this particular page, I wrote on an adjoining page the conviction of Andrew Martin Fairbairn: "Jesus was Deity manifested in humanity and under conditions of time."

Shying off from the deity of Jesus because of its "confusing connotations"! Perhaps it were better to grow in the grace and knowledge of its transforming experimentations! There are those who are aware of having experienced both attitudes. Because the second is the fulfilling experience of the first rather than a confusing connotation, they also exclaim, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" Talk about the wonder of a universe of universes! Here is the Superconscious, Supercosmic and Superhistoric Wonder who alone gives meaning to all created wonders in the individual, to all transforming wonders in the social, to all deathless wonders in the heavens of light and love! For the Christ of Glory in the Jesus of history is now the concentrated reality of the Christian God for time and eternity.

DURING the last thirty years, people from all the countries of the earth have consulted me. I have treated many hundreds of patients, the larger number being Protestants, a smaller number being Jews, and not more than five or six believing Catholics. Among all my patients aged over thirty-five, there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. *C. G. Jung.*

Jesus The Enemy

By Samuel H. Miller

There standeth one among you, whom ye know not. John 1:26.

SOMEONE has certainly compromised Jesus! It came like a flash of light, when I saw Dives the self-sufficient wizard of wealth, and Pilate, the town politician, proud of his power, and Judas the go-between, intent on doing big things his way, and Caiaphas the hard, self-righteous man quick with judgment, and the criers of "Lord, Lord" with their unctuous sentimentality, and the nonchalant "hangers-on" who condescend to "support" the church—all these and others, singing with lusty satisfaction, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus!" Think of it! The very people who would have been castigated by Jesus of Galilee patronizing him! Something has happened since that age when wrong recognized him as its enemy. Carlyle puts it abruptly: "How different is that honey-mouthed, tear-stained, soup-kitchen Jesus Christ of our poor shovel-hatted Christians from the stern-faced Christ of the Gospels, proclaiming aloud in the market place with such a total contempt of the respectabilities: 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!'" He was the Lion and the Lamb of Judah, but for multitudes today he is just the Lamb, that's all—and rather docile at that!

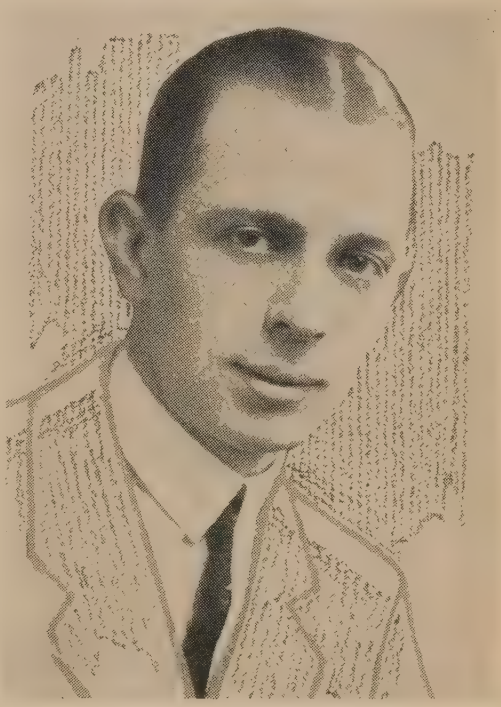
Just as children may be spoiled by a mother whose love "runs away with her judgment," so the church is in peril of being spoiled by its own conception of Jesus as the Friend of All. It has tended to eliminate all the sterner qualities of his ethical character and filled the space with an indiscriminate love. It has robbed him of his uncompromising hatred of wrong and filled the vacancy with a pale sort of gentleness. It has taken away the caustic flame of his saviorhood and in its place substituted the comfort of his protection. The silent passive figure, so correct theologically, has been clothed with ecclesiastical lordship and sanctified by the label of Jesus' name, but his spirit, full of energetic lightnings like swords of truth and right that fall across our lives and reveal what we are in utter candor, has dwindled to the detriment of our souls.

OUR TOO COMFORTABLE CONSCIENCE

This at least partially explains the amazing phenomenon of vast numbers of Christians maintaining a comfortable conscience in the midst of our social melee of injustice and suffering. It enables multitudes to sit on the deck of this old world and sing in pious exaltation, "Jesus, the very thought of Thee, with sweetness fills my breast," while humanity festers below decks in the shackles of ignorance, sin and social cruelty. We have so magnified the friendly element of Jesus' character that we have practically abolished his ethical discriminations. We have taken his good will and spread it so far that we have covered up his indignant antagonisms. We have loved him into an unreal, doting Savior whose love may pamper us while the world decays in sin and our own souls rapidly degenerate to the same end. We have limited his anger to the first century and his scorn to the scribes and Pharisees. We need the acid of his hate to cleanse us of our corrosive indifference; we need desperately the caustic fire of his straight honesty to burn away the tangled thickets of our self-deceit and irresponsibility; we want a Savior who has strength to cast out the devils that possess us, not a namby-pamby "yes-man" to sing a lullaby to them.

We have forgotten that Jesus can be our "enemy" rather than our friend; that he can accuse, rather than excuse; that he can stand over against us, rather than for us.

To put the matter another way, we have so far appropriated Jesus that he no longer maintains his own



Samuel H. Miller

independent existence or his own personal judgment. He has become our echo. Like artists, we have drawn his portrait too much like ourselves. We have made him ours so thoroughly that there is danger that his objective reality shall be ignored and even lost. For many he is their "defender" rather than "challenger," soothing the conscience rather than stirring it. While the church has strenuously objected to making Jesus nothing but a myth, too many members proceeded by their thinking to rob him of his actual independent existence. They made him what they wished him to be—all unconsciously without a doubt.

THE FIERY SCOURGE OF JESUS

By some such psychological process in the church, Jesus has been made the most comfortable person in the world to live with and to adore. The plain fact is that he was anything but that in his own day. Did he not renounce his own family with shocking suddenness? Did he not call Peter, who was solicitous of his safety,

a devil? Did he not tell the young man of fine character who lacked but one thing to sell everything he had and give it all away? Did he not set himself up higher than Moses and thus disturb the spiritual equilibrium of the people? Did he not preach in the very synagogue where he had received his training and point out God's preference for Gentiles as a challenge to them? Did he not whip the souls of the religious leaders of his day with a fiery scourge of scorn? Jesus certainly did not cuddle anyone then!

But—today! To a large degree, Jesus is quite harmless. The presumption seems to be that if he were living among us, he would be perfectly safe as a dinner guest, and if he said anything embarrassing at all, it would be to someone else—surely not to us! We love to mouth the words, "Come unto me all ye who are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—but we usually avoid his trumpet call to inconvenient heroism: "Unless a man hate his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." We like his clear statement that "they who worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth," but we manage to forget his equally clear commandment: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift."

The truth is that like the artists we have been emasculating the Master until all that remains is a mystic halo which men use for a pawn in the chess game of theology, and an erotic weakness and sentimental emotionalism in which they find refuge from the stern realities of spirituality.

THE REAL JESUS

Let us turn aside from this pitiable figure, the figment of a sick sentimentalism, to the real Jesus of Galilee. We can be sure of one thing—he will not pet us or pamper our self-complacency. Think of him cuddling us in this world where we allow starvation to exist in the midst of plenty; famines in one land and rotting crops in another; unemployment for multitudes and dividends for millionaires! Picture him cuddling us while weaker nations are being exploited and future generations robbed of natural and spiritual resources; or while we dishonorably keep our honor with gas and gun; or while despicable corruption makes the administration of justice a tragic lie! Imagine what he would say if he came face to face with the hysterical activities by which the church maintains a semblance of life, or the vaudeville-worship that gets a crowd, or the picayune loyalties and squint-eyed interpretations that disgrace religion with sectarianism, or the half-hearted, sickly dallying with religion characteristic of a large portion of the church. Surely no smirking smile would be on his face—rather his eyes, stern with judgment and full of the fire wrought by a strong compassion for the victims of our world, would burn to the marrow of our bones with a terrible accusation.

Hating our littleness, despising our comfort, scorning our hollow worship, contemptuous of our poorly disguised selfishness—Jesus stands against us, the Enemy of all that is not right in us or in our world. Until we can conquer the enervating mood that makes Jesus the symbol of undiscriminating sentimentalism, his saviorhood will be anemic and powerless, not to say a mockery, in the midst of modern problems where human life lies in the balance to be marred or made by some Strong Determiner of Destiny.

The consequence of the matter is this: until we regain the counter-irritant of Christ the Enemy, he will not and cannot be the Friend we need.

Dynamic Faith

By H. R. L. Sheppard

I AM frightened of well-meaning men who are ignorant, but I am frightened to death of clever men who are unconverted. Why is it that today we are sick and beside ourselves with the fever of disillusionment? The reason is this: we have tried to believe in man without believing in God and now we can believe in neither. With the loss of our faith in the living God and his purposes for mankind, the world has gone to pieces. Men have no courage for the fray, little hope for the future and little belief in their fellows. We shall regain our faith in man only when we have regained our faith in God. Nothing but faith in a living God can now produce the dynamic which shall not merely rescue this generation from despair, but lead it out of Bedlam into sanity.

It is the decisive hour for our religion, Christianity must either go forward or go back.

* * *

I speak to professing Christians. May I respectfully suggest this task—to make up your mind whether you really want Christianity to prevail or no, and if you answer "Yes," as most of you will, what will that entail?

A great many of us are prepared to open the door to God but we take great care to keep the door on the chain. We are drifting. The greatest casualties to religion occur on the L.L.R.—the line of least resistance. I am not pleading for loud declarations about our readiness to do heroic things. We have every reason to distrust our emotional utterances; like soda-water, they go flat the morning after. The world is strewn with the literature of idealism, our council chambers resound to the applause with which we are accustomed to acclaim every lofty sentiment. We rise to drink the toast of righteousness, but we drink it in bumpers of insincerity. What I am asking for is the quiet, constant recognition by all men that they cannot improve their world faster than they can improve themselves. Humanitarianism, scientific or unscientific, is not only dead but damned today. It is no good now thinking we can pull ourselves out by clutching at our own hair. What we need is a great many more citizens, each at his own post, who can be relied upon under all circumstances and at all times to do the honest upright thing. What we require is a fresh supply of plain-sailing men and women, the sort who can be trusted with small sums, and who will do

what in them lies to maintain the sovereignty of God and to restore the credit of a nation's Christianity.

Let me remind you of a sentence from the Pilgrim's Progress: "Then did Christian draw for he saw it was time to bestir him." My friend, are you satisfied with your condition, are you black or white or just neither one nor the other, merely a bit shady? Do you think the days can be redeemed unless you and I take a hand? Do you think our broken world can be mended unless the patients within it attend to the great Physician of their choice? For mark you, we have not for one moment as yet suggested that the words and the touch of Jesus Christ have lost their ancient power.

In this world of strange values in which we have grown to distrust everybody and everything there is only one person whom we have no wish to modify, and only one condition which we are still always prepared to respect—that person is our Lord Jesus Christ, and that condition is to be found in any area of life—home, workshop, office or church—in which the way of living in his spirit is being taught and attempted.

* * *

Can we expect sanity to return to the world unless we are prepared to pull our weight in the open field where the battle for righteousness is being determined? The greatest, perhaps the only, perfect gift that we can give to our world today is the gift of ourselves at our best, and I know not how that may be given unless we are prepared to rekindle in our own souls that God-given love which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things for Christ's sake.

But how may this be done? My life is lived, you cry, away from every aid to righteousness. I have long since drifted from those incentives to Christian living which were recommended to me when I was younger and incidentally more sensitive to the appeal of the spiritual. What must a man do, you ask, to recover his soul?

First of all he must know that his condition is serious. He must cease to bluff himself any longer, and to say: "I have never done anybody any harm." He must give up thinking that at any moment by his own volition he may change from drift to dedication. The way to God is clear and open, but the going will be hard and we shall need the grace of God. That grace is always everywhere available but we must go out and fetch it in.

Second, a man may recover his soul if he realizes that others will be involved in the disaster if he does not—wife, sister, children. If the world, including our own home, is to go down in the darkness because of man's deliberate denial of God's values there will be only one man whom you and I will be entitled to blame, and that is the man whom we shall see if we look in the mirror when this service is over. Let us cut out once and for all the carping criticism that puts the blame for our condition on some other fellow. It is sometimes well to suspend our judgment of others until we have taken stock of ourselves. It is well too to realize that so far as our little bit of the line goes it will hold or crack according to our character and conduct.

Never despair. There is no need. God's biggest victories are won on battlefields that have seen his heaviest defeats.

We have been reminded that wisdom and power incarnate once informed a despairing generation that when things seem at their worst it is the very hour to lift up the heart and greet the dawn of better days and deeds. And the great Physician who won the world's heart by living out what he taught, chose the darkest hour to utter that astounding claim, "My words shall not pass away." Lift up your hearts; only, as you lift them up, remember that you and I are sinners who need a Savior.

From an article in St. Martin's Review (London),

Lenten Verse

As the Sculptor

As the sculptor devotes himself to wood and stone
I would devote myself to the living soul.
But I am solemnized by the thought that the sculptor cannot carve
Either on wood, or on stone, or on the living soul,
Anything better than himself.
All the lines of my carving
Will but reveal my own portrait.
Gazing at my hand, at my chisel, I shudder.
How long will it take for this human sculpture,
Which can not be carved by me better, finer than my own soul,
To escape! To escape from my pitiable and limited domain,
And to advance to the position of a carving of God?

Happily, there is a Guide for me.
It is He who has broken open the door of the Sanctuary
And made a molten cast of God's Portrait on His own flesh.

TOYOHIKO KAGAWA.

Beyond Electrons

THEY who once probed and doubted now believe
The Men of Science, for they humbly learn
There is a Will that guides the atom's course;
A Power that directs what they discern
In light and air, in star and wave and sod;
Beyond electrons they discover—God!

From research they derive a new faith that
Sustains foundations of our ancient creeds;
They grope through matter toward an utmost Light
And find a living God behind His deeds.

ADELAIDE LOVE.

Talk Faith

TALK faith. The world is better off without
Your uttered ignorance and morbid doubt.
If you have faith in God, or man, or self,
Say so; if not, push back upon the shelf
Of silence all your thoughts till faith shall come;
No one will grieve because your lips are dumb.

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

Ruling Ideas in Preaching

By Gaius Glenn Atkins

THE problems of most preachers—as preachers, and not as advisers of the President, life-adjusters, budget-balancers for self, family and church, and earnest inquirers about where-do-we-go-from-here—reduce themselves to two: What to preach, and how to preach it. A minister must do any number of things besides preaching, but as Dr. Carl Patton says, if he can't preach he won't get the chance to do them.

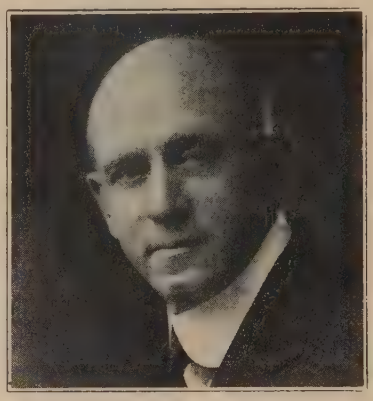
Something is to be said for approaching this problem through the region of ruling ideas. The phrase is Washington Gladden's. He once wrote a little book of essays and called it "Ruling Ideas of the Present Age." Some of his then "ruling ideas" would now very likely seem to have been seated on unstable thrones, but his pregnant phrase and the insight behind it—that the life and movement, however confused, of any period are controlled by certain dominant ideas and that to understand the time one must understand its ruling ideas—is permanently true and has a wide range of application.

● *Varieties of Ruling Ideas*

Ruling ideas may be, and are: social, political, ethical, philosophic, religious. They may be held clearly, loosely, or in a fog. They are more often inherited than acquired. They may be as enduring as the hills or unstable as water. Times of order and stability have always been marked by a general acceptance of well-defined and generally accepted ruling ideas. In anarchical periods ruling ideas are dissolved and their dissolution involves states and institutions. In periods of major transition the true lines of conflict are between ruling ideas—always—and our time illustrates this. The rise of a new range of ruling ideas changes history. Out of ruling ideas kings reign and rulers administer justice, administrations promote new deals, congresses legislate, supreme courts hand down decisions and preachers make sermons.

All good preachers have ruling ideas. When one hears any one of them often and long enough, one recognizes what his ruling ideas are and what he is going to make of any text he takes or any topic he announces. The issue is determined before the sermon is begun. Any number of minor things give a sermon color, warmth, music, movement and interest. Its ruling idea organizes and directs it: the ruling ideas of the preacher have determined its purpose and its major movement.

The outstanding differences between preachers and periods of preaching are just here. Futile preaching has no ruling ideas. Repetitious preaching has one ruling idea, narrow range preaching has only a few. Resourceful preaching is well stored with ruling ideas and finds fresh approaches to them and strategic applications of them. Great preaching marshals great ruling ideas. Their power and amplitude create an adequate style, make words their disciplined servants and lift preacher and congregation to



Gaius Glenn Atkins

their own noble levels. And "patterned" preaching—which is what most of us have to guard against—has fallen under the control of one set of ruling ideas.

These may be little patterns of introduction, development, illustration and conclusion. They may be larger patterns of thinking—no matter, they are set. Few of us get into the middle period of our preaching without consciously or unconsciously falling into these patterned forms. They were the free instruments of creative power to begin with. They become, to end with, inelastic habits hardening down. About the only things that will really break them is a change to a new (for any one preacher) range.

● *What Can Be Done About It?*

This can not be developed in detail in a brief article. But a preacher can begin by testing his preaching by the number and range of his particular ruling ideas. He will need to review a year's or five years' preaching to get their graph, to check the texts and topics to which he most naturally turns and psychoanalyze not himself but his sermons for their association lines. He can thus make a map of the regions in which he has been preaching—and then ask himself why. Especially *why?* The result will be his own affair. It is likely to be the somewhat disconcerting discovery that most of us preachers have fewer ruling ideas than we think we have; that we do not use all we have; that some of them are not big enough to rule; that some of them fail to gear into life; that some of them are—like French kings once were—do-nothing ruling ideas, crowned ghosts of what once had regal power.

What can be done about it? Certainly one does not improvise them nor go out Monday morning and get a new set. They are slowly gained, either by the individual or society, and they resist being unseated. They are never actually pure ideas at all. They are "complexes" attended by emotions, funded in cherished institutions and defended by all kinds of vested interests, even in the preacher's own mind. But there are ways of doing something about them.

● *A Change to Textual Preaching May Help*

Perhaps it will be well to change from topical to textual preaching. A preacher's topics—if he works from them directly—are nearly always exhibits of his own private stock of ruling ideas; they share his resources or his limitations. Something suggests them, of course. They may be suggested by the needs of his congregation, by the morning newspaper or the blameless desire to be quoted in its Monday edition, by his understandings of life, or religion, by the books he is reading or the problems, inner or outer, he is working through.

But they are likely to be through all their disguises *his* way of reacting to whatever suggested them, and share *his* strength and limitations. Textual preaching changes all this—unexpectedly. A preacher may impose his ruling ideas upon his text. Most of us do; that is inescapable. But it leads, if we persist in it, to homiletic confusion. The text says one thing, we turn and twist it to say another—and the text, the congregation and the preacher suffer together.

But let the text impose its truth, its suggestion, its imperative upon the preacher. Then he becomes the voice of a thousand years of inspired insight, of psalmist, prophet, teacher, moralist, apostle and the apostles'

Master. The preacher's horizons thus widen immeasurably. So will the sources of his preaching. There are more texts in the Bible than the original-or-other-ideas most of us have. They bear upon almost every conceivable situation and somewhere there is always a text which reaches it by an unworn road. Even where old ideas govern—as perhaps they should—they get all brightened up and bring with them a joy of creation which will touch any sermon with a spiritual glow. The most resourceful preacher will sooner or later exhaust his topics. He will never exhaust texts.

● *Try Preaching from "Clean Pages"*

Textual preaching may get patterned? Certainly it does. Then move into a new textual region. Most pulpit Bibles open of themselves upon certain books and passages. (Where study Bibles open, deponeth saith not; most likely about where pulpit Bibles open.) Try the clean pages for awhile, especially the Old Testament, which is alive with contemporaneous situations presented in texts which are vivid, dramatic, alive with imagination. They can still, like the stones from Isaiah's altar, communicate their fire.

It is ungracious to write anything about study. Every minister has a study but the direction and focusing —especially focusing—of what he does in it bears upon this whole matter. The preacher's materials are about him—or accessible—in always widening circles; from the dictionary at his elbow to the world in which his text lived and the world in which he fondly hopes to make it live again.

● *Look Over Your Ruling Ideas*

Somewhere in this always widening circle of study is the examination of the ruling ideas, of the preacher's world. "They are," as Bishop Butler said, "what they are and the consequences of them be what they will be." They seem just now an ill-assorted and quarrelsome lot—promising, many of them, quite unhappy consequences. But they are what the preacher has to reckon with and do something about, for they are there incarnate in the pews before him every Sunday. The preacher will not get his ruling ideas from this present world, but he will get an objective for their drive which may change his entire approach and compel a new alignment of his gospel.

This involves not only the reexamination of his own set of ruling ideas; it involves his consideration of the ruling ideas of the Christian message. They came out of life and its needs, to begin with, but the bearings of some of them are worn smooth and others seem to have no bearing at all. Some of them have served their day, more of them need reinterpretation, and those of them which are timelessly dominant need to be geared into life again—the kind of life we are now living with *its* ruling ideas and understandings and occupations—to drive and guide it as they were meant to drive and guide it. They have new auxiliaries of knowledge and insight, they have an unlimited field of application. They are still sovereign.

● *Gospel Ideas and the Present World*

The power of preaching lies in its capacity to establish the authority of the really ruling ideas of the Christian gospel over the ruling ideas of this present world. For there are gradations of ruling ideas; thrones and principalities and powers and dominions of them. Some of them pass as shadows pass when the sun goes down. Some of them are good if they work under orders, a few of them are and ought to be in timeless control of all the rest. These are of the very structure of the Christian faith. Preaching might be their most effective agent. Nothing else is dealing with the master controls of life; not literature, nor journalism, nor politics nor education. These have, between them, produced the disorders of our lives and our societies. When a preacher's ruling ideas rise to their true level of Christian dominion, they will last his life out and find a new pattern for themselves every Sunday morning.

The real trouble with the ruling ideas of preaching which has lost its drive is actually not the lesser things with which this contribution began. It is that they do not rule. The preacher's problem is to find out why. His power is to preach out of truths which, with their attendant train of duties, desires, faiths and hopes, really have the right and power to rule, to preach a message of living import and creative authority. How he can get it down and in and across is another matter. But if his ruling ideas really have a divine right, he can stop worrying about them. His task then is to see, as far as one man can, that they not only reign but govern.

POLITICS UNCHRISTIAN?

R. W. Dale, of Birmingham, received not long ago a little anonymous note of rebuke to this effect: "There are no politics in heaven; there is where your life should be; sad, sad that it is otherwise."

The doctor publicly replied to this note and others of a kindred class by an able pulpit address, in the course of which he said:

"Now that was very kindly meant, but can you imagine anything more absurd? You might as well write to the physician of any great hospital and say to him, 'There are no hospitals in heaven; there is where your life should be; sad, sad that it is otherwise.' Or to the chairman of the London and Northwestern Railway company and say: 'There are no railways in heaven; there is where your life should be; sad, sad that it is otherwise.' I should not wonder if the good Christian person who sent me this admonition sometimes gathers poor people together and gives them tea and good little books and I might write to him and say: 'There are no meetings and good little books in heaven; there is where your life should be; sad, sad that it is otherwise.'

"No politics in heaven? Well, I suppose not, but there are no agricultural laborers there, living on twelve shillings a week, whose condition political action may, perhaps, ameliorate.

"There are no hereditary paupers there, born to live a life of weakness and wretchedness, who by political action may, perhaps, be raised into living a manly, honorable and self-reliant life.

"There are no goals in heaven, to which little children, perhaps, of criminal parents are sent for an offense committed in ignorance, and where they are trained to a life of crime.

"In heaven there are no unjust wars to be prevented, no cruel reckless ambitions to be curbed by the will and power of a free people.

"Politics unchristian?"

HUGH ELMER BROWN.

There is still room for all of us on this earth of ours, still work for all, still food for all, if we know how to govern ourselves as children of the one Supreme God.—*Bishop Cook.*

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WHO'S WHO in THIS ISSUE

ORDAINED in the Baptist ministry in 1904, Rev. HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK was pastor of the First Baptist church, Montclair, N. J., from 1904 to 1915. For seven years he was instructor in homiletics in Union Theological seminary, and since 1915 has held the chair of practical theology at Union. He has ministered to Riverside church, New York, during this period. Dr. Fosdick has written many books, among them "The Manhood of the Master," "The Assurance of Immortality," "The Meaning of Prayer," "The Meaning of Faith" and "The Modern Use of the Bible." His latest volume is entitled "The Power to See It Through."

Rev. JAMES A. RICHARDS *was minister* at the Congregational church in Winnetka, a suburb of Chicago, from 1918 to 1928, and for the past eight years has led the activities of the great college church of Oberlin, O., the First Church in Oberlin. Earlier pastorates were in Newport, R. I., and Boston.

Following a five-years pastorate at Kings Highway Baptist church, New York city, Rev. RAYMOND C. BURNS served as associate minister—in charge of education—with Rev. Harold C. Phillips, at First Baptist church, Cleveland. Since September of last year he has been teacher of religion and ethics in Western Reserve academy and pastor of First Congregational church, Hudson, O.

For several years Rev. VERE P. LOPER has ministered to the Pilgrim Congregational church in Denver. He has been especially active in the field of social betterment. Mr. Loper is a staff correspondent of The Christian Century.

Ordained as a minister in the Methodist Episcopal church, south, in 1899, Rev. FREDERICK F. SHANNON soon became widely known as pastor of Grace church, Brooklyn, and of the Reformed Church on the Heights in the same city. Closing his fifteen-year ministry in Brooklyn in 1919, Dr. Shannon came to Central church, Chicago, to succeed the late Dr. Frank W. Gunsaulus. Among Dr. Shannon's many books are "The Enchanted Universe," "The Infinite Artist" and "The Unfathomable Christ."

Rev. SAMUEL H. MILLER *is minister of* the Old Cambridge Baptist church, Cambridge, Mass.—on the edge of Harvard Yard. Earlier pastorates were at Belmar, Arlington and Clifton, N. J. Mr. Miller has been chairman of the Committee of Fifty for Social Action in Passaic Valley, in New Jersey.

Rev. H. R. L. ("Dick") SHEPPARD has for many years been pastor of the famous St. Martin's church in London.

Rev. TOYOHIKO KAGAWA, *Japan's greatest* Christian, is famous as preacher, social reformer, novelist and poet. He inaugurated the Kingdom of God movement in Japan and is a foremost advocate of the Cooperative movement. Dr. Kagawa is now speaking before great audiences in this country. The Prayer included in this issue is from his new volume, "Meditations on the Cross."

GAIUS GLENN ATKINS *is professor of* homiletics and sociology at Auburn Theological seminary.

TITLES AND TEXTS

What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

FREDERICK W. NORWOOD, City Temple, London. "The Credulity of Unbelief." Acts 26:8—"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should. . . ."

PAUL SCHEARRER, Takoma Park Presbyterian, Washington, D. C. "Religion and the Status Quo." Exod. 5:4—"Why would you unsettle the people?" (Moffatt)

JOHN D. CLINTON, Methodist, Fulton, Mo. "Welding—a Christian Virtue." Eph. 2:21—"In him the whole structure is welded together."

ARTHUR H. BRADFORD, Central Congregational, Providence, R. I. "The Reproof of Life." Prov. 15:31—"The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise."

RALPH MARSHALL DAVIS, Church of the Covenant, Erie, Pa. "Giggling at the Angels." Gen. 18:12—"And Sarah laughed within herself. . . ."

J. ALLISON FRASER, Greenwood United, Baddeck, Nova Scotia. "Jesus Christ as a Trouble-Maker." Matt. 10:34—"I came not to send peace, but a sword."

G. CLIFTON ERVIN, Elm Street Methodist, Chillicothe, Mo. "Today's Challenge to Youth." Eccl. 11:9—"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth."

C. SUMNER OSGOOD, Congregational, White Plains, N. Y. "Invisible Chains." Jer. 40:4—"I loose thee this day from the chains which are upon thy heart."

ROBERT L. HOUSE, Congregational-Christian, Newport News, Va. "The Testimony of Tolerance." Acts 5:38, 39—"And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God."

W. GARNET ALCORN, First Christian, Fulton, Mo. "The Peril of a Moment." Luke 4:5—"And . . . showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time."

FOR YOUR SERMON AND TEXT

. . . . . .
Title of Sermon

. . . . . .
Text used (write out the text)

. . . . . .
Name of minister

. . . . . .
Name of church

. . . . . .
Address

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The Event of the Month

GLADLY as I welcome the supreme court's decision on the TVA, I cannot disguise a feeling of misapprehension in respect to the mode of reasoning which led to it. The court is itself in danger of breaking down the constitution under such interpretations as the TVA decision. The constitution is in the way of becoming an instrument of legal hypocrisy whose application to questions which arise from time to time cannot be reasonably predicted. The genius of a written constitution lies in the fact that the people who made it knew what they intended it to mean, and that the people who live under it know substantially what it means. Minor and marginal differences of opinion as to its meaning are of course taken for granted, and such differences are rightly settled by the court. But the TVA decision involves no such marginal question. It involves the exercise of a federal function which the fathers never contemplated and which they would have rejected had the question been raised. Yet the court pretends to justify this federal function by the narrowest kind of legalism, in total disregard of the realities. On the basis of the legalistic fact that the TVA operations are an incident in the improvement of navigation on the Tennessee river, the court allows the government to engage in the business of manufacturing and selling electric power. My satisfaction in the outcome does not blind me to the fact that the government's case and the court's decision are shot through with hypocrisy. To call this constitutional government is national self-deception. There are two ways by which the authority of the constitution can be broken down. One is by outgrowing it. The other is by hypocritically twisting and distorting it to keep up with the nation's growth. If the latter process goes much further we shall not be governed by a constitution but by a majority of the nine judges.

The TVA Decision

The Book of the Month

PRESENT THEOLOGICAL TENDENCIES, *by Edwin Ewart Aubrey. Harpers, $2.00.*

TO BE ABLE to tell what other men believe is a fine art. Indeed, it is a Christian virtue. We so easily misrepresent others by caricature, or by not putting forth sufficient labor to understand them in the first place. Professor Aubrey is a scholar—that goes without saying. But he is a Christian scholar—and that is no common variety of scholar. He deals with other men's thoughts with painstaking care—as if they were his very own most precious convictions! In this book he covers the field of modern theology in search of the tendencies or trends which exist among our most influential thinkers. He finds four main schools of thought grouped under the headings of Modernism, the Dialectical Theology, Neo-Thomism and Naturalism versus Supernaturalism. In interpreting each writer Dr. Aubrey shows that he has put himself in the writer's place and tried actually to get the "feel" of the writer's convictions. Meticulous documentation accompanies his exposition. Theology is treated as both an aspect of general culture and an answer to the needs which arise within cultural experience. He finds that modern society is characterized by three fundamental weaknesses: lack of discretion, lack of motivation and poor morale. The problem of Christian thinking is set by these basic lacks in our cultural situation. How the various schools of thought react to these needs and how each proposes to satisfy them constitute the framework within which the author expounds the positions of contemporary theologians.

A Thought for the Month

I LIKE to believe, and I think I have the right to believe, that we are entering a new period of history which may fairly be called a new renaissance. Many people survey our times and settle down to a gloomy pessimism. They see such radical changes taking place, such dissolution of institutions, and such confusion of standards, that they are sure we have come upon the end of an age, if not the end of civilization. They are right in regarding our time as a profoundly revolutionary one, but they are wrong in taking a pessimistic view of it. My way of looking at it is governed by the reflection that the end of an era is always the beginning of an era! If certain characteristic forces of the old era have spent themselves, it is because new forces are already on the field preparing a new world for humanity. It is only because these new forces and new ideals are already here that we can recognize the nature of the passing forces and ideals. Indeed, pessimism itself is possible only because a new age is upon us in whose light the old order is adjudged a failure. A man is pessimistic only because he is unaware of the source of the light by which he condemns and laments that which is passing away. The optimist is one who sees the *source* of this light. He sees that capitalism, for example, has broken down and is passing away because new human values have emerged—a new sense of justice has taken hold of men—the standard of living for the masses has been raised. Old-fashioned capitalism cannot meet the demands of these new values. Why bewail its passing? Why bewail the passing of sectarian religion when it is a new insight into Christianity which condemns it? Why bewail the passing of humanism when it is bankrupt only because it stands in the presence of a new theism more inspiring than orthodox theism ever was? Whether you are pessimist or optimist will depend on which way you face: If you look backward you will see only that which is passing away; if you look forward you will see a world being born anew.

Which Way Do You Face?

Charles Clayton Morrison

The APRIL issue of The Christian Century Pulpit will be an

EASTER NUMBER

IMMORTALITY will be the theme of sermons contributed by

NORMAN VINCENT PEALE, Marble Collegiate church, New York.

FREDERICK W. NORWOOD, City Temple, London, Eng.

M. H. LICHLITER, First Congregationalist church, Columbus, O.

BRUCE S. WRIGHT, Old Stone (First Methodist) church, Meadville, Pa.

ROBERT MERRILL BARTLETT, First Church of Christ (Community church), Longmeadow, Mass.

CARL KNUDSEN, Church of the Pilgrimage, Plymouth, Mass.

WILLIAM F. ROTHENBURGER, Third Christian church, Indianapolis, will contribute a Preacher Problem article on "The Preacher in a Revolting World."

SAMUEL HARKNESS, Winnetka Congregational church, Winnetka, Ill., will contribute the Pastoral Prayer.

The MAY issue will be a general number, and will include sermons by William S. Abernethy, Washington, D. C.; Joseph Fort Newton, Philadelphia; O. W. S. McCall, Berkeley, Cal.; Alfred Grant Walton, Brooklyn, and others. Memorial day and Mother's day sermons will be included.

The JUNE issue will be a College Number, with sermons that have been preached before college and university audiences. The sermons will be contributed by ministers who are continually preaching to audiences of intelligent young people.

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